

TJC

Bell Tower



Spring 2008



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About the Title

Just as the Bell Tower at Tyler Junior College chimes on the quarter hour to mark the passage of time, it reminds students of the harmony which surrounds them in their educational pursuits. Music, dance, theatre, art, athletics, and academics blend to make Tyler Junior College a beacon to the community, the state, and the world at large. As the echoes of the chords filter through the oaks, their vibrations tremble far beyond the confines of the brick archways and winding walks where students gather. Tyler Junior College is a lofty tower of educational opportunity for students who have come from all parts of the world. The Bell Tower Arts Journal proudly hails the accomplishments of its hallowed halls and beckons those who would seek both its traditions and the promise of tomorrow.

Judith Bateman, 2006

The Bell Tower Arts Journal

Volume 2 • 2007 – 2008

Editor

Linda Gary, Ph. D.

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The editorial board for the journal is comprised of full-time faculty members from the English Department, the Graphic Arts Department, and the Fine Arts Department. The editorial board has the final approval on all selections and publication decisions.

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Editorial Policy

The Bell Tower Arts Journal is sponsored by the Psi Gamma Chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the National English Honor Society. We accept submissions of poetry, short fiction, non-fiction essays, photography, and fine and graphic art by current Tyler Junior College students. We accept submissions for consideration only during the fall semester each year for possible publication in the subsequent spring semester. The Bell Tower Arts Journal is entirely student generated and seeks to provide a publishing venue for the rich artistic expression of TJC students.

Our goal is to create a publication that is a high quality, content-rich source of literary and artistic expression on a wide range of topics and themes. Therefore, we seek unique, insightful work displaying vivid, lively language and artistic skill.

All submissions must be the original work of the student writer or artist who submits it for consideration or publication. We do not accept previously published or plagiarized work. Every attempt is made by the editor to assure originality. All literary pieces will be submitted to turnitin.com for an originality report. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of each student to submit only his or her own literary and artistic work.

Moreover, while we strongly support intellectual freedom as the right of every individual from all points of view, we do not accept work deemed pornographic, profane, exploitative, or that seeks to cause injury to an individual or group.

Tyler Junior College gives equal consideration to all applicants for admission, employment and participation in its programs and activities without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability or veteran status.

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Table of Contents

Little Sisters	7
Tiffany Dukes / Freshman / Wills Point, Texas	
Window Clones	8
Emily Michelle Cotton / Freshman / Chandler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	
Strings	8
Cierra McGuckie / Sophomore / Celeste, Texas / 41"x30" Watercolor, Acrylic, and Charcoal	
Eyes of the Summer Mid-day Sky	9
Aaron Gardner / Sophomore / Van, Texas	
A Girl I Saw	10
Faith Blanchard / Freshman / Grand Saline, Texas	
Your Empty Words and My Red Shoes	10
Hayley Young / Sophomore / Liberty City, Texas / B&W Photograph	
Behold	11
Christina Ivey / Sophomore / Lindale, Texas	
Elmwood	12
Jessica Halifax / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas	
Teachings of Honor	13
Joyle Rosenberg / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	
Alone	13
Danielle Delgado / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	
Disconnected	14
Hayley Young / Sophomore / Liberty City, Texas / B&W Photograph	
The Gate	15
Tina Bausinger / Sophomore / Springdale, Arkansas	
Solitude	15
Zachary McClune / Freshman / Tyler, Texas	
Las Vegas	16
Sarah Dean Stallings / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	

Master of Marionettes.....	16
Aaron Gardner / Sophomore / Van, Texas	
One Love, Unconditional.....	17
Jennah Rose Criner / Sophomore / Winnsboro, Texas	
Beneath the Old Oak Tree.....	18
Faith Blanchard / Freshman / Grand Saline, Texas	
Old Brick Chimney.....	20
Morgan Hare / Sophomore / Lubbock, Texas / 35mm Color Photograph	
Hiding Under My Hat.....	21
Hayley Young / Sophomore / Liberty City, Texas / B&W Photograph	
Riding the Rails.....	22
Joyle Rosenberg / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	
Bryson.....	22
Sarah Elizabeth Dupree / Sophomore / Bullard, Texas / 18"x24" Prismacolor	
Empty Vessel.....	23
Faith Blanchard / Freshman / Grand Saline, Texas	
Father So Far From Home.....	24
Don Stryker / Freshman / Yantis, Texas	
Napping.....	25
Mary Tarbutton / Freshman / Whitehouse, Texas / Digital SLR	
Looking Down From Above.....	25
Jessica Niebel / Freshman / Van, Texas / Digimax Master Photograph	
Defiance.....	26
Danielle Delgado / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	
Happiness is a Leprechaun.....	26
Jessica E. Hall / Freshman / Tyler, Texas	
There's a Peter.....	27
Faith Blanchard / Freshman / Grand Saline, Texas	

One Size Fits All.....	27
Christina Ivey / Sophomore / Lindale, Texas	
Just Don't Know!.....	28
Shenna Hampton / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	
Baby Face.....	29
Sarah Dean Stallings / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	
Zebra Stripes	29
Sarah Dean Stallings / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	
Just a Game.....	30
Christina Ivey / Sophomore / Lindale, Texas	
How Great.....	35
Carole Kiphen / Freshman / Waco, Texas / B&W Photograph	
Summer Rain	36
Stephanie Homann / Sophomore / Bullard, Texas	
Why? A Poem About Mental Instability	38
Jennah Rose Criner / Sophomore / Winnsboro, Texas	
The Final Letter.....	39
Jonathan De La Piedra / Sophomore / Lindale, Texas	
Abandoned	41
Maeghan Ghormley / Freshman / Van, Texas / Gelatin Silver Image	
Suida/Calla.....	41
Rachel Salcido / Tyler, Texas / 3'x3' Oil on Canvas	
Picking Tomatoes.....	42
Tina Bausinger / Sophomore / Springdale, Arkansas	
Sweet Anticipation.....	46
Sarah Dean Stallings / Sophomore / Tyler, Texas / B&W Digital Photograph	

Little Sisters

Tiffany Dukes
Freshman
Wills Point, Texas

Little sisters are an epitome of dismal darkness:
Like vampires feeding on the
 nerves of sane individuals,
Draining life from all that is still good,
Unable to stop till total ruin is amidst.

Sisters are Tasmanian devils:
Smart and cunning, troublesome and weary,
Spinning around in a fury
Just because everyone thinks they are cute.

Coming in as a thief in the night:
They pillage all which may catch the eye,
Taking all without remorse, worry, or care,
Not willing to admit the crime which they commit.

A little sister is a tornado:
Devouring all within the path on which she travels,
Like a storm with intention, with peril in mind,
Smashing, trashing, and looting consumes these
 foul creatures.

Little sisters are gnats, always buzzing in an aroma
 of nuisance:
Every time you make a plan they seem to need a lift;
As hard as you may attempt to hide,
They appear from nowhere, along for the ride.



Window Clones

Emily Michelle Cotton
Freshman
Chandler, Texas
B&W Digital Photograph



Strings

Cierra McGuckie
Sophomore
Celeste, Texas
41"x30" Watercolor,
Acrylic and Charcoal

Eyes of the Summer Mid-day Sky

Aaron Gardner • Sophomore • Van, Texas

I first laid eyes upon her,
A beauty inconceivable, yet conceived,
An untouched diamond nestled into Earth's womb;
Although others would polish and shape her,
Nature never blessed a woman as much as she.

She turned to me with her eyes,
Blue and bright as summer's mid-day sky;
Already my heart ascended to great heights,
Raced and burrowed straight through my chest,
And into her hands before she even spoke.

The Siren of tales long forgotten sang to me;
Her voice was gentle, light, and as high as heaven,
Breaking through the darkened clouds ailing me;
This beacon of sunshine, beckoning and illuminating,
Enlightened me even to the darkest of depths.

Oh, but such beauty is not meant to be claimed,
Especially by a man tainted such as I;
I who envy the creatures soaring in the skies,
Knowing she lingers so far beyond my reach,
Destined for so much more.

A Girl I Saw

Faith Blanchard • Freshman • Grand Saline, Texas

Who is this little girl I see?
Who's dancing in the rain?
A glowing smile on her face
That puts the sun to shame.

Who is this little girl I see?
Who's floating on the air?
A graceful, wispy cloud she is
That butterflies can bear.

Who is this lively girl I hear?
Who's singing silly tunes?
A gracious, tender voice she has
That catches rosy blooms.

Who is this blessed little girl?
Who's laughing at the wind?
A grateful, open heart she has
That none can apprehend.

Your Empty Words and My Red Shoes

Hayley Young
Sophomore
Liberty City, Texas
B&W Photograph



Behold

Christina Ivey
Sophomore
Lindale, Texas

She weeps when
No one is looking.
Just a few tears:
One for each brain molecule
She's killed with
A mixture of the fumes
From all her hair chemicals...
Or maybe for every time
She's contracted some
Horrible infection from
Swapping eye make-up
With her friends.
Or maybe it's
For every run in her hose,
Every bad hair day,
Every time her shoes
Didn't quite match her
Outfit just right.
Or maybe...
For once
The tears aren't
About her appearance at all,
But each one is for
Every second she's wasted
Trying to make
Her outer shell
Cover the fact that
It's exactly that:
A shell.
If beauty
Is in the eye of the beholder,
Behold:
The end of beauty.

Elmwood

Jessica Halifax • Sophomore • Tyler, Texas

Driving down Riverside Drive, the trees glowed with autumn colors of bright yellows and oranges. An intoxicating smell of fall sailed through my car as I rolled the windows down. Seeing my landmark, a small fork in the road, I stayed left and turned onto Elmwood. Passing one, two, now three houses, I pulled over to the side of the street and parked the car.

There it stood--my home, my memories, the ghost of my childhood. The house looked, with some minor changes, the same as I remembered. Somehow, though, it did not feel the same. The flowers in my mother's garden, though showing signs of neglect, still enveloped the front porch with the last beauty of summer. The pine tree my brother had since fifth grade no longer stood in the yard, its roots displaced and new ones thriving in its place.

The wind rustled through the trees, and autumn's beauty set sail, making its graceful flight to the depths below. I could almost see a little girl laughing and twirling amongst the whirl of leaves before falling and vanishing into a pile of fatefully discarded leaves. One leaf remained in midair, gently swaying, prolonging its fate before resting on the grass below.

Upon watching that leaf, a tear swelled in my eye and silently glided down my cheek. This life on Elmwood with this house would never be the same again. Wiping the tear away, I started the car and pulled away, looking straight ahead--for what was there to look back to? Elmwood was no longer my street, and this was no longer my home.

Teachings of Honor

Joyle Rosenberg
Sophomore
Tyler, Texas
B&W Digital Photograph



Alone

Danielle Delgado
Sophomore
Tyler, Texas
B&W Digital Photograph



Disconnected

Hayley Young • Sophomore • Liberty City, Texas • B&W Photograph



The Gate

Tina Bausinger
Sophomore
Springdale, Arkansas

I'll walk you to the gate, I said,
And took his hand in mine.
You'll have to go on without me;
I can't come along this time.
I'll go as far as I can go
And kiss you on the cheek.
I've heard it's nicer in that place
If peace is what you seek.
He turned and smiled before he went;
I knew he was okay.
I whispered that I'd be there soon
As he quietly shut the gate.

The bell chimes once, then fades away:
The only one to enjoy the day.
The quiet, the calm, the solitude,
The only sound to lift the mood.

The sound unheard, the soft words spoken,
All else leaves solitude unbroken.
A lonely peal, the sound but token;
Thankful for the soft words spoken.

Glad for silence undisturbed,
With no more cares for spoken word.
Solitude and silence wed
A peaceful silence, like the dead.

Solitude

Zachary McClune
Freshman
Tyler, Texas



Las Vegas

Sarah Dean Stallings
Sophomore
Tyler, Texas
B&W Digital Photograph

Master of Marionette

Aaron Gardner
Sophomore
Van, Texas

I've lived a century within my mind,
A lone marionette of oak and linen,
Swaying lifelessly at your whim,
Confined further with every tugged heartstring.

I grow weary, dear puppet master,
Of your feigned tranquility,
Of your charming mechanics;
Your execution makes Brutus a saint.

Discard me further, but this I beg you:
Cast mercy upon this servant;
Exile my desire and blanket its remains
Beneath sheets of frost so blissful.

And the puppet master replies,
"Dearest child, live with desire,
For pain is your greatest mentor,
And love is life's test it bears."

One Love, Unconditional

Jannah Rose Criner
Sophomore
Winnsboro, Texas

Standing at the edge of nothing,
A fragile soul bound in chains.
With wandering eyes, heart-broken,
A feeble mind held victim by the pain.
Suddenly the night's all-consuming;
Suddenly the day is dead and gone.

Looking at the wide expanse
Of a hopeful life, wasted and worn.
Her shoulders bend, heavy-laden;
She can't survive this present storm.
Suddenly the sky breaks open;
Suddenly she's filled with a song.

One hand, just a breath away.
One voice in the night.
One heart, with endless faith.
One love to make it all right.
One touch, filled with tenderness.
One word is all she craved.
One love, unconditional,
Is all one soul needs to be saved.

One brand new life
Awaits her with the dawn.
One peace, one joy unheard of,
The demons are gone.
One passion, alive with hope,
Ignites a light within.
One love, unconditional,
Gives her life again.

Beneath the Old Oak Tree

Faith Blanchard • Freshman • Grand Saline, Texas

The sunlight flickered through the branches of the trees and danced in gentle waves over their colorful leaves. Creeping past the rusty gate and climbing over iron fences, it shooed away the lingering shadows and brushed off the remainder of their existence from the ancient headstones. A lazy mist, resting on the ground, rose in alarm by the sudden sunlight. Gathering up the folds of her skirt, she skipped further down the sleepy valley, past a narrow path, hand-in-hand with the shadows.

This path fingered its way through an old graveyard. Scattered leaves blown across the path lingered for only a moment before the autumn breeze carried them away once more. Several worn headstones leaned to either side of this path in sharp contrast against the crisp, morning sky. Some were fallen and crumpled after so many years of neglect and scarcely recognizable among the ruin, their epitaphs fading away and their memories lost and forgotten. Shading this trodden path and the various graves below, trees, dressed in bright gowns of gold and purple, stood as guardians in this quiet place.

Glancing away from the silent path and the familiar scenery around her, a young woman, standing beside a lone grave, turned her attention back to the stone that lay beside her feet. It was not old, moss-eaten, or broken, but its smooth, gray surface rested nearly hidden with the furrows of the dying grass that had covered it for the past five years. Stubborn weeds laced their way across the words *Beloved son, brother, and father*.

Sadness rose within her at the sight of the unkempt grave. How many years ago was it now? She wondered as she kneeled and gently pulled away the dry, frosty grass and brushed aside the moist dirt from the cracks of the letters. Tracing the cold stone with her fingertips over the simple words, many memories of happier times rose before her.

Her brother. How could she forget--his experiments with cooking, his sudden surprises, his ready smile, yet those sad, sad eyes. A sudden, cold breeze scraped across her face, taking with it in an instant those happy memories and leaving her with a sense of reality and regret. Lifting her eyes as the wind carried away the leaves from beneath her skirt, she watched them travel a short distance and then settle beside a tree. She could not forget the words she last spoke to him or how she read the pain in his

eyes when she uttered them.

She glanced again at the tree before her. It had stood there for many years now. She remembered seeing it the day they had buried her brother and how it seemed to her to be some kind of refuge, sheltering his grave from the harsh weather and scorching sun. Now fully dressed in different shades of color, she wondered at the changes the weather had wrought upon it. Scarred and wearied by many storms, it still held firm, burying its roots deep into the earth and stretching its slender arms up to the heavens. These tender arms clasped tightly to the shaking leaves that the occasional wind threatened to blow away. Yet, one by one, it cleanly swept them off to light on the ground below. Nevertheless, though the tree was stripped bare, its structure and foundation remained. When the smell of smoke from a distant chimney came drifting through the air, tangled with the scent of red apples and fresh pears, a tiny memory tugged at the borders of her mind.

One Thanksgiving Day spent so long ago, she remembered the sheer pleasure on her brother's face as he moved about the kitchen, dabbling in this pot or that pan, helping when and wherever he could. His greatest joy was cutting the turkey and finding the wishbone that he would later set aside for his dear sisters. "Wait three days and then break it and make a wish," he told them.

Though for some time during his life he had brought sorrow to her family with his wrong decisions and obvious weaknesses, she now realized he never meant to harm them, and he loved them. She vaguely remembered the morning when the police called, informing them that her brother had died in his sleep. Such a peaceful way to go, she thought. The one hope she held captive was the small smile he wore when he fell asleep.

Staring off into the distance and watching the sunlight peek around the trees, beauty surrounded her; but a tinge of sadness threatened to steal away what wonder spread out before her. She judged him harshly so many years ago, but she realized amidst all the troublesome past, he forgave her. She saw how often he tried to protect and care for her though he often fell beneath his own weakness. He was like that tree that hovered over his gravesite. How often it bore the cruel treatment of the heating sun, the raging wind, and the battling storm! Yet, by these same sources, it learned

to grow stronger, reach higher, and spread its branches further over the shadowy ground. Perhaps without these trials, it would have been a weak tree, but it held strong, waving in the wind that sailed by it in gentle strokes, accepting the seasons as they came.

As the young woman rose to her feet, she brushed off the leaves and grasses that clung to her skirt. Gazing once more at the tree, she wondered at its splendor, "God does give us strength to stand against such storms, and He does supply us with the grace to endure them." Making her way back to the path, she placed her hands on the iron gate, running her fingers over the rusty handle. With a soft sigh, she turned it and stepped outside. Glancing back at the lone grave beneath that old oak tree, she gave a faint smile. Then, turning away, she closed the gate.



Old Brick Chimney

Morgan Hare
Sophomore
Lubbock, Texas
35mm Color Photograph

Hiding Under My Hat

Hayley Young • Sophomore • Liberty City, Texas • B&W Photograph





Riding the Rails

Joyle Rosenberg
Sophomore
Tyler, Texas
B&W Digital Photograph



Bryson

Sarah Elizabeth Dupree
Sophomore
Bullard, Texas
18"x24" Prismacolor

Empty Vessel

Faith Blanchard
Freshman
Grand Saline, Texas

My dream's an empty vessel
Set sail so long ago;
No longer does it venture
Where ocean winds may blow.

My dream's an empty vessel
That sailed the seven seas;
Now grounded by an anchor
That no man ever frees.

My dream's an empty vessel;
The crew no longer there,
No whispers from its cabins,
No sailors anywhere.

My dream's an empty vessel
Tied to the harbor's land;
Though with the tide it wishes
To slip beyond the sand.

My dream's an empty vessel;
Its sails still folded tight.
Though once they felt the tugging
Of raging winds of night.

My dream's an empty vessel
Like many in this bay;
Their time for fame and glory
Were for another day.

Yet dreams are not forgotten;
Some sails are meant to fly.
While others we must hold back,
The rest will never die.

Father So Far From Home

Don Stryker • Freshman • Yantis, Texas

When you were born, within days I left in a hurry.
Off to the desert, a cave, dark and dreary,
No time to bond with one's child clearly,
A father I am, a father so far from home.

Through the blowing sands and scorching heat,
My eyes see more vividly to the time we will meet;
No notice of now, how my spirit has peaked,
A father I am, a father so far from home.

Eight months and twenty days, this missed time gone by.
You're crawling, babbling, laughing, and now I try not to cry,
Wanting to come home so by your side I could lie,
A father I am, a father so far from home.

A land and country that is loneliness, a mother wailing despair;
A desert is home, a home without my children I compare.
I wipe the tears, missing your cries--I'll be home soon I declare,
A father I am, a father so far from home.

Time has come near to leaving this place;
I think of pleasant things like the smile on your face.
I feel like I've been caught as a rat in this war's rat race,
A father I am, a father so far from home.

Duty to country is like duty to one's own child;
Both are important and the responsibility is not mild.
These things I will teach when I get home from the wild,
A father I am, a father so far from home.

The plane has landed in safety, but still I am in fear;
Not knowing what to expect, a stranger am I though near.
One look in your eyes, the smile on your face, this I hold dear,
A father I am, a father just home.

Looking Down From Above

Sarah Elizabeth Dupree
Sophomore
Bullard, Texas
Digimax Master Photograph



Napping

Mary Tarbutton
Freshman
Whitehouse, Texas
Digital SLR





Defiance

Danielle Delgado
Sophomore
Tyler, Texas
B&W Digital Photograph

Happiness is a Leprechaun

Jessica E. Hall
Freshman
Tyler, Texas

Happiness is ... a leprechaun,
Skipping through the forest,
Singing a song and drumming
On tree trunks.

Where will you go next, little one?

Your path is upward climbing
To the top of the hill
Through the sprawling vines of
Passion flower.

The fluffy feathered birds join
In your song as they dine
Under the protection of
The great willow tree.

The forest is a joyous dwelling.

All is well in simplicity.

And not a thing worth holding is lost.

There's a Peter

Faith Blanchard
Freshman
Grand Saline, Texas

I don't wish to grow older;
I want to stay this way.
And skip the years by smoothly
That never seem to stay.

I don't wish for tomorrow;
Though with its wings it flies
Too swiftly for my comfort
Into the morning skies.

I don't wish for the sunrise;
Though try I might in vain
To sleep all through the morning
That dreams may still remain.

I don't wish for the autumn
To blow away my years;
All these my friendly playtimes
And, yes, those fretful tears.

I don't wish to grow older;
I want to stay the same,
Like Peter and the lost boys,
Who never quit their game.

But children can't stay little
Though they may cause a fuss;
Yet somewhere there's a Peter
In every one of us.

We all wear one
From time to time:
That sly little smile.
It stretches across our faces
And hides our true emotions.
It attempts to
Cover what we
Don't want seen:
Every minuscule detail
Of who we are
That we're afraid to show,
Masking us from the world
With an air of happiness
That is never truly felt.
It hangs there uneasily,
Waiting to be
Discovered for what
It really is;
Sometimes it feels
Like it's too heavy to wear,
but we put it on,
Carrying its burden
With us, smiling
Through it all
While inside
We're quietly dying.

One Size Fits All

Christina Ivey
Sophomore
Lindale, Texas

Just Don't Know!

Shenna Hampton • Sophomore • Tyler, Texas • B&W Digital Photograph



Baby Face

Sarah Dean Stallings
Sophomore
Tyler, Texas
B&W Digital Photograph



Zebra Stripes

Sarah Dean Stallings
Sophomore
Tyler, Texas
B&W Digital Photograph



Just a Game

Christina Ivey • Sophomore • Lindale, Texas

“Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen! I’m Ace Stevens welcoming you to the live coverage of this historic event. You might have noticed the green behind me seems considerably smaller than usual, and the atmosphere’s slightly more carnivalistic. Well, don’t change the channel, folks. The events of today are sure to be a must-see for any golf enthusiast.

“As many of you already know, last month legendary retired golf pro David Hemsley challenged rising up-and-comer Jeremy ‘Par-None’ Forrester to a simple game of miniature golf in what many have called Hemsley’s last effort to remain in the spotlight. Never missing a moment to shine in the spotlight himself, Forrester eagerly accepted, vowing to ‘put the old geezer in his place once and for all.’

“Regardless of who wins here today, folks, the real winners are the kids. All proceeds from this charitable event go towards The Children’s Literacy Fund, an organization that yearns to put the gift of literacy ‘in the hands of every child, everywhere.’

“Now, let’s go live to Hole One here at Phoenix Acres Putt-Putt. I’ve just been told that Forrester and Hemsley have selected their putters and are ready to begin.”

The two men stepped up to the front of the first hole, both clutching an ancient golf putter and distinguishable colored ball. “So, which one of us will take a crack at this first, son?” asked the old man.

“Man, I’m not your son. And what’s that old saying? ‘Age before beauty?’ I do believe that means you, old man.”

“Very well.” With that the old man walked forward to the first tee mat and gently bent down to place his red ball on the designated spot--his age and gravity making this a much harder task than he had expected. As he rose, he analyzed the obstacle before him. The first hole was a gigantic clown’s head, seemingly more fitting for a nightmare than a miniature golf course. Flaming red hair sprouted underneath a large purple hat that gave

the illusion that the clown was on fire. Its purple eyes shifted back and forth, occasionally settling long enough on the old man so that the clown could laugh eerily, challenging him to take the shot. The large mouth opened in a heinous grin with large, crooked, green teeth, periodically closing to prevent access to the small hole in the back of the clown's throat. Smoke machines had been placed on either side of the clown's face so that it appeared as if the head were floating slightly above the ground. The entrance to the green was barely visible. The old man adjusted his red sweater vest uncomfortably and took his place. Head bent over the putter, he closed his eyes and began to hum "This Little Light of Mine," a song that had always calmed him down before a major putt during his professional years.

"Doesn't take all day to play a round of mini golf," said the young man.

The old man ignored the comment, took in a deep breath, brought the putter back, and let go. The ball raced forward; the putt had been executed with the skill and grace that had won the old man many accolades in his past. But it seemed as if it were no match for the cunning clown. The ball bounced off the sinister smirk and landed right back at the old man's feet. The clown laughed, seeming to mock the old man's futile attempt to sink the shot.

The young man burst into wild laughter. "Are you kidding me? Old man, is your game so washed up, you can't even play a game of mini golf?"

The old man tried again, this time narrowly missing the gigantic closing jaws and making the entrance to the green at the back of the throat. Shaken by such a distressing start, the old man finished two strokes later.

"Finally," scoffed the young man. "Now, move aside and let me show you how it's done."

The young man took his place at the tee and swiftly dropped his purple ball down into position. He adjusted his cap, gave a quick smile to the camera and the surrounding audience, and without looking back down, forcefully swung the putter. The ball shot forward violently, quickly passing the unhinging jaw and straight through the opening at the back of the clown's throat to the other side where it slipped into the hole.

"And that's how it's done, old timer."

"Impressive, young man," said the elder.

"Yeah, I know. Good thing you retired, huh?"

"There is no need for such remarks. We're not here to be hateful to each other. It's just a friendly competition."

"Sure. Or maybe just some poor old man's last ditch effort to stay in the spotlight."

"Today is not about the publicity," the old man retorted. "It's about the children and demonstrating what it means to be a good role model while raising money for an organization for them. It seems ridiculous to base one's pride and existence on such a silly game."

"Whatever helps you get through losing the next seventeen holes, old timer. I still say this is just your last crack at a life back into the pros."

"Believe what you like. Let's just continue, shall we?"

For the next few hours, the game continued. Each man exhibited his talent, sinking one putt after another as the afternoon grew older. By the time they reached the eighteenth and final hole, the large statue of the phoenix that stood in the middle of the park was casting a large shadow over them.

The last hole was the traditional windmill--a ten-foot structure that was painted red with large rotating slats in front of the tiny entrance to the back where the green lay. Clearly the oldest edifice on the course, the

windmill's paint was beginning to chip in places where the sun had not been very kind. The canvas covering the large slats was unraveled in various places, and the engine that turned them moaned with each circle. It had once been the most proud structure on the course, and with the proper repairs, it could easily take that prestigious place once again. Now, however, the windmill seemed to be clinging to life, stubbornly wanting to stay on the course as long as it was allowed.

"Seems as if I'm ahead. Surprised you could keep up as much as you did, old man. You have to make this one to have even half a chance of winning."

The old man repeated the same process that he had used on all the previous shots. As he began to hum "This Little Light of Mine," the young man interrupted him. "Exactly how long does it take to shoot a ball through a windmill, old man?"

"If you feel as though you would do a more satisfactory job, sir, why don't you go before me and...what did you say? 'Show me how it's done'?"

"Gladly, you old geezer. Maybe after I show you up one final time, you'll know better than to steal the spotlight from those who hold it now."

"Oh, I think one of us will surely learn his lesson from this, young man. Go ahead and take the shot."

The young man pushed past the old man, nearly knocking him over to take his place at the tee mat. The windmill loomed ahead of him, mocking him with every circle of the giant slats. He threw the ball down on the ground and kicked it into place with his foot. The shadow caused by the phoenix's statue was now completely covering them. The wind began to blow, and the old man smiled as the cool breeze whipped around him.

Ignoring his usual idiosyncratic playing strategy, the young man

violently smacked the ball as hard as he could towards the target. Suddenly, as the ball landed in the hole, the old man gripped his chest and fell to his knees. Some members of the audience gasped and screamed while others quickly attempted to run to the aid of the old man. An emergency team rushed to his side and pushed the patrons out of the way. The old man was now going into severe convulsions and shaking violently. The paramedics placed him on a stretcher and lifted him into an ambulance. Sirens began to wail as the old man was transported away from the Phoenix Acres Miniature Golf Course.

A voice over the loud speaker broke the tension. "Ladies and gentleman, Ace Stevens here. For those of you who've just tuned in, we've just witnessed something quite unsettling. About an hour ago, legendary golf pro David Hemsley collapsed here on the Phoenix Acres Miniature Golf Course from what appeared to be a major heart attack. The EMTs have rushed him to the hospital, and our sources there tell us that it... it... doesn't look good, folks. He's been in a coma for the past half hour, and doctors don't expect him to make it through the evening.

"Here with us is Jeremy Forrester, who was participating in this fundraising event with Hemsley. Jeremy, any words to say about the situation?"

"First of all, Ace, I'd like to apologize for my previous actions this afternoon. David Hemsley was a well-respected individual in my profession, and I didn't treat him with the respect he rightfully deserved. I would like to send my humble regards and apologies to the Children's Literacy Fund. I would also like them to know that I'm doubling all the money we've raised today and sending it to their organization in David's honor. David was very passionate about that organization, and I believe it's the very least I can do. After all, it's all about the kids today. I just hope my actions haven't given

them the wrong impression; I only wish to be a good role model for them.”

“Thank you for those inspiring words. Once again that was Jeremy Forrester, folks, golf’s newest sensation who was a first-hand witness to the devastation here at Phoenix Acres Miniature Golf Course. During his statement, we received word that David Hemsley, legendary golf pro, has indeed passed away from what doctors at the local hospital are calling the most bizarre heart attack they’ve ever seen. We will continue to give you updates as they come along about funeral arrangements and memorial ceremonies in honor of Hemsley. Hemsley was a widower with no children, and he considered his fans to be his family. So, my condolences go to you, ladies and gentlemen, who have been avid followers of Hemsley’s career throughout the years. This is Ace Stevens, folks, sending you my sincerest apologies and wishing you a good night.”

The young man solemnly walked away from the camera towards his limousine. Upon reaching the door, a cool breeze began to blow around him. He turned his head towards the statue of the phoenix, smiled, and began to hum “This Little Light of Mine” as he opened the door and got into the car.



How Great

Carole Kiphen
Freshman
Waco, Texas
B&W Photograph

Summer Rain

Stephanie Homann • Sophomore • Bullard, Texas

I had been dating him for several years. We knew each other inside and out. Our lives were intertwined, and we were comfortable with each other. Yet, somehow, that summer was different. I'm not sure if I was just at that age where everything seems romantic, or if something about that summer was magical. All I know is that summer was special.

He was built just right--slightly under six feet and muscular with blond hair and sky-blue eyes. He made every girl's head turn. I never really understood why I was the girl that he wanted. I had sun-bleached brown hair and green eyes. I was voluptuous, to say the least, and that particular summer I had a tan. We spent the whole summer together. We went to the public swimming pool, rented movies, and spent time with our friends. There were no social events that we attended that were spectacular, save one.

We were too busy with each other to care much about anyone else. There were small parties, and everyone spent most of his or her free time at my house. One night it all got to be way too much. We were at my house visiting with the same old group of friends when I couldn't stand it anymore. They all had to go. We politely asked everyone to leave and spent the next thirty minutes just talking and holding each other. We had planned to spend the whole night that way, but it was spoiled. The telephone would not quit ringing. Finally, I grabbed my purse and keys.

"Let's get out of here," I said.

It didn't take any pleading. He took the keys, and we were off. We drove for what seemed like hours. There were roads in my little hometown that I wasn't aware existed until that night. He knew that I was suffocating. I loved our friends, but they all just seemed to need me too much or hang out for too long. As we drove, he didn't say a word. He just held my hand and listened to me sing along with every song on the radio, never once

telling me just how bad I sounded.

It was the perfect summer night, warm with a slight West Texas breeze. I never paid much attention to where he took me; I knew I was safe when I was with him. Before I knew it, we were driving down an old dirt road and up an overgrown driveway. Before I could look around to see where we were, he had turned the lights off and parked the car. From the first few chords, I immediately knew the song--it was our song.

"Get out. Let's dance," he whispered in my ear.

I got out of the car, and we danced. All of a sudden the sky lit up as the lightning flashed, and the thunder rolled. We didn't care. We just held each other close as the warm summer rain began to fall. After the song ended, we held on just a little longer, soaking in the summer rain. He knew how to make me feel special, like I was the only girl who had ever existed. As it turned out, we were at his family's farm just a few miles from my house. He drove me home, and we stayed up late watching some movie that was not important enough to remember. The moments passed by slowly. I loved him, and I knew that I always would. I fell asleep in his arms, safe and secure, far away from all other aspects of life.

Nothing about that night was very eventful except it was the last precious moment that I remember spending with him. We dated for a long time after that, and we had good times. But that one moment is the last great memory that I have of him. Nothing tragic happened. No one died; we just grew apart. There were circumstances that made our relationship impossible as time passed by. It's funny how as you grow older and your relationships mature, there are trivial things that you miss. Everyone has that one thing that sticks with him or her. And I will *always* miss the summer rain.

Why? A Poem About Mental Instability

Jennah Rose Criner • Sophomore • Winnsboro, Texas

Just one question:
Why?
I don't understand.
It's not like I asked for this.
People are losing patience.
Starting to get angry.
And me?
Well, naturally,
I'm pissed off, as well.
It's my body I can't control.
The demons that I can't get away from
Are in my head.
This is my disease.
So don't you
Lecture me
About me.
Because nobody doesn't know me
As well as
I don't know me.
You know nothing.
Dammit!
This is not my fault!
I didn't ask to be this way!
I'm fighting, dammit,
As hard as I can
Against something that I can
Neither see nor
Fully understand.
I am just as confused
And exhausted as you are.
More so.
Remember,
You can walk away
Whenever
You damn well please.
I can't.
The only freedom I have
Is doing what you call
The mthinkable.
And I have a secret for you
That just might horrify, repulse, or

Disgust you.
I have thought the *mthinkable*.
Become rather fond of the idea.
You just don't get it,
Do you?
It's getting closer.
Every single day
It's getting closer
To the point where
The mthinkable
Will someday soon be
The mforgivable.
Spare me your sympathies.
Don't you dare
Pretend that you know
What I have to know.
This is my life
You think you have so much
Tied up into.
But let me ask you something:
When I lose
That which I have to lose,
What will you lose?
Really...
In all actuality,
What have you lost?
Don't you patronize me!
I am not a child.
Don't feed me that
There's light at the
End of the tunnel
Psychobabble b.s.
How do you know?
Have you actually seen it?
I didn't ask to be this way.
Dammit!
I didn't ask for this.
So why,
Dammit?
Why?

The Final Letter

Jonathan De La Piedra • Sophomore • Lindale, Texas

As I sat and anxiously waited,
I kept in mind those words you last stated;
You'd be home shortly--
That's what you'd assured me.

Then the day arrived when I heard a knock at the door;
Quickly I ran, sliding across the floor,
But as I approached the door I found you weren't there.
Instead it was another young man, much like you,
Wearing that uniform of Marine Corps Blue.
He regretted to inform me that you'd been killed.

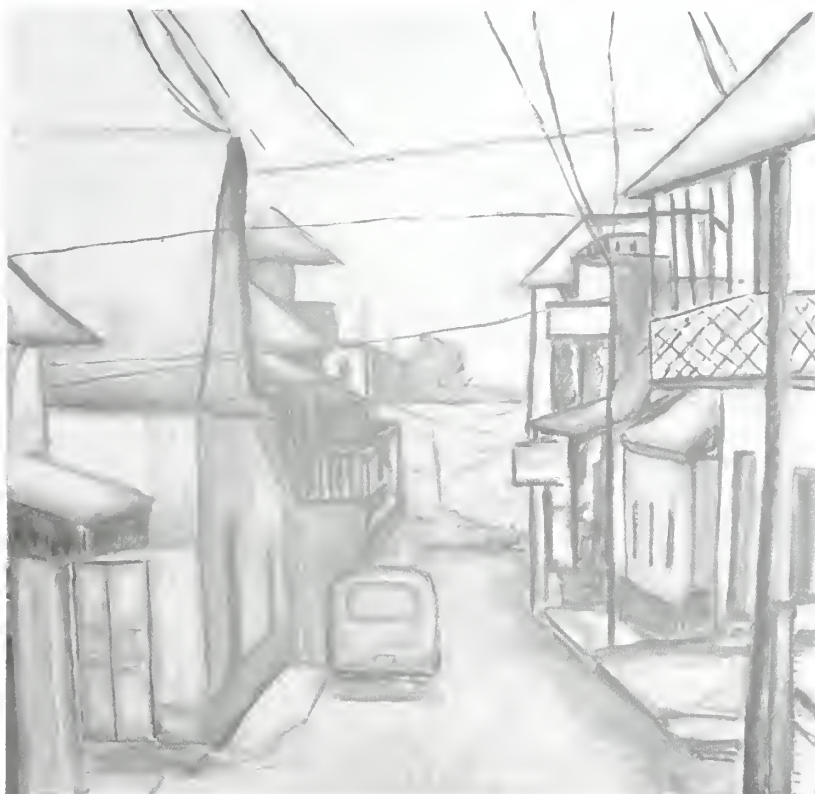
He told me you held your head high
Even at times when you knew you were surely to die.
He read the letter aloud,
All the while assuring me I should be very proud.
Killed in action,
That's what the letter had officially said
With *United States Marine Corps* on the letterhead.
They hadn't said it would be this rough;
How am I expected to be so tough?
I'd asked you to hurry;
You'd last written not to worry--
You'd be home shortly.

God, how can this be?
Surely my son was not taken from me;
Surely You can't allow this.
He was a good young man who followed your Word;
Why did You take him from me?
The whole time I kept blaming God, you see;
I looked at the young man and said, "Surely this is a mistake!"
"Please, God," I prayed, "let this letter be fake."
"No ma'am," he said, "I'm sorry to say."

God, why couldn't You have given me just one last day?
Collapsing to the floor as I came to realize that you had died,
"God help me!" I cried.
You fought for our nation and all of our lives.

You wore that uniform so proudly,
Giving your life for others unselfishly.
With your job comes great risk;
Great men live and great men die,
Fighting for our freedoms.
So we can fly that flag way up high.
They do what it takes to keep us living,
Yet we often take for granted what they are giving.
It's their lives they give for us, you see;
Those of us like you and me:
White and blue collar, we're all free.
No matter what you say,
We owe a lot to the United States Military.

Each life lost is a mother's heart broken,
But another of God's angels is called home to heaven.
Their stories I promise won't go unspoken;
We'll make sure to remember all of you, especially after Nine-Eleven.
Watch over us now, fallen soldier, as we pray:
We know we will meet you again someday.



Suida/Calla

Rachel Salcido
Sophomore
Tyler, Texas
3'x3' Oil on Canvas



Abandoned

Maeghan Ghormley
Freshman
Van, Texas
Gelatin Silver Image

Picking Tomatoes

Tina Bausinger • Sophomore • Springdale, Arkansas

It was early September in Arkansas. There was an occasional breeze playing with my hair, kissing my brow. I bent over, picking all the tomatoes from the curling green vine that threatened to climb up the fence and escape. I love the earthy smell of the tomato plants themselves, the small yellow blossoms making them pretty as any flower. The back yard was uncomfortably hot and steamy as the humidity from the noonday air made me feel sticky, but still I lingered in the garden. It was quiet outside with only the sound of a neighbor's lawnmower. *Who is mowing at noon*, I wondered, but still, it was not as quiet as the inside of the house. An old patio table and matching chairs, white and dusty, sat hot and dirty from disuse.

I had finished hanging Dad's clothes out on the clothesline to dry, spreading the legs of the stiff blue jeans so they would dry all the way, and now I was picking the remainder of the tomatoes; they were almost gone. I was hoping to slice them up and give them to Dad. It was all he would eat yesterday, and I figured they were as nutritious as anything. He was eating less and less these days. We would sit together in the living room with our TV trays, watching old movies on Lifetime and thrillers on HBO. Sometimes I would try to make conversation, or he would, but it was becoming increasingly difficult.

Normally, autumn in Arkansas could not be beat as my favorite season. I was admiring the gorgeous fall foliage that was unfolding before me. The leaves had begun their metamorphosis from summer green to the colors of autumn. The orange color brought back memories of childhood camping trips and sitting around the fire. I could almost smell the smoke and hear the crackling of the camp fire as I remembered my mom, dad, and three sisters roasting marshmallows after a day spent fishing. The

sticky blue tent with black netting for windows was our haven. Once, we camped on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico. A storm rose up in the middle of the night, and the tent shook like a child's toy in the too-large fingers of an uncoordinated toddler. The autumn yellows reminded me of my dad's garden a few years back when he grew squash, and being sort of an amateur gardener, he planted too many to handle with his full-time job. The squash consumed the garden, choking out the tomatoes, onions, lettuce, and carrots. The brown reminded me of my father's eyes, laughing as he told a joke he'd probably already told me or tearing up at my wedding when he witnessed my vows or wincing in pain when the cancer, like the squash in the garden, had taken over his fifty-nine year old body, leaving him helpless and bedridden. The red leaves brought to mind Dad's new car he had bought back in February, a brand new Mitsubishi Eclipse, a testament of hope to himself, and us, that he would be around to drive it. And the fall red, the gorgeous red, reminded me of Dad's tomatoes that he had planted only a few months before when he could still get around. He normally planted a large garden, but this year he only planted tomatoes. Red, this year it seemed, was the color of hope.

"Hey, Tina!" Dad's crusty old neighbor, who only went by the initials W.C., called to me from his yard. I put the last of the tomatoes in the green ceramic bowl I'd been holding, dusted off my hands on my jeans and went over to him.

"How's your dad doing?" He asked in his deep, throaty voice that had been damaged by years of smoking and some kind of accident when he was young. He furrowed his brows in concern.

"Well, not too great," I said quietly. I always felt sort of guilty talking about Dad's condition with anyone. Although it had become my whole world--putting pills in a cup, making his meals, doing his laundry,

picking his tomatoes--I felt kind of like it was gossiping to talk about him. I didn't want to disclose too many details.

"I saw him a few weeks ago, getting something out of his car," W.C. went on. "He looked pretty bad then. I haven't seen him out of the house since." He was genuinely concerned.

"I know. He...doesn't get around too well these days." That sounded like he was eighty-five years old, puttering around in a nursing home somewhere. The truth was that he had already fallen twice and had to be rushed to the ER once because he was too weak to get around anymore. When I was five, like all little girls I guess, I thought that my daddy was the strongest, handsomest, and bravest. It was killing me to see him become more and more isolated and almost bedridden, but it made him feel even worse. It had put me in the awkward position of telling my dad what to do — instead of the reverse. I used to ask his advice. *Dad, what movie should we see? Which school should I go to? What kind of car should I buy?* Now it was up to me to ask him about which bills were due, what pants he wanted to wear, and to remind him to take his pills. Once, after he had fallen, we had a heated argument about him using the bedside commode instead of the bathroom toilet. Even though I promised to step out and give him his privacy, he was furious. I ended up in tears, hating every minute and threatening to go home. He apologized, and we both realized how the tables had turned. I was now the parental figure, and he was the child.

"Can I come over and see him? Just for a few minutes? I won't stay long," W. C. pleaded quietly. He had been friends with my father for over ten years.

"I wouldn't mind," I said, "but he's told me he doesn't want to see anyone." I felt terrible about it, but the truth was that he mostly slept in between the medication and the pain. He had specifically asked me to limit

his visitors to a few friends and relatives. When I asked him, only half kidding, if he thought he was some sort of celebrity for letting anyone see him, he kidded back, sort of bitterly, "Well, business has been picking up lately!"

"Well, okay, I understand," W.C. acquiesced. There was a moment of silence between us as we realized this meant he would not see Dad again until his funeral. I felt the tears, ever threatening and burning my eyelids, pooling and then dripping unwanted on my cheeks. Unchecked, I feared they would not stop.

"Let me know if you need anything," he said, the words I heard most often from friends, relatives, and even people I barely knew. They were usually empty words from most people, a way to end the uncomfortable conversation, so they could go back to their lives and leave me with mine. Empty words from most but not from this man. Never from him.

"Actually," I began, looking at the dry dust on my shoe and feeling comfort from the cool porcelain bowl in my hands, "I was planning to ask you if you would be a pall bearer." I could not meet his eyes with mine at first, and when I reluctantly looked up, he too had tears welling in the corners of his eyes.

"Of course," he immediately answered in a voice more hoarse than usual. For a moment, we stood there in silence. I looked over the fence to his yard, to his garden, which was plentiful with at least five rows of corn and assorted vegetables. His garden probably took up a quarter of an acre. "I guess I'll head back to the house. Mom's fryin' chicken," he said, managing a smile before he was gone.

And I was left holding my bowl of tomatoes, lingering in the hot afternoon, staring at the oak tree that was a hundred-years old, and wondering at its leaves that seemed to be on fire.

Sweet Anticipation

Sarah Dean Stallings • Sophomore • Tyler, Texas • B&W Digital Photograph



Literary Selections

Tina Bausinger
Sophomore / Springdale
“Picking Tomatoes”

Tina Bausinger
Sophomore / Springdale
“The Gate”

Faith Blanchard
Freshman / Grand Saline
“A Girl I Saw”

Faith Blanchard
Freshman / Grand Saline
“Empty Vessel”

Faith Blanchard
Freshman / Grand Saline
“Beneath the Old Oak Tree”

Faith Blanchard
Freshman / Grand Saline
“There’s a Peter”

Jennah Rose Criner
Sophomore / Winnsboro
“One Love, Unconditional”

Jennah Rose Criner
Sophomore / Winnsboro
“Why? A Poem About Mental Instability”

Tiffany Dukes
Freshman / Wills Point
“Little Sisters”

Aaron Gardner
Sophomore / Van
“Eyes of the Summer Mid-day Sky”

Aaron Gardner
Sophomore / Van
“Master of Marionettes”

Jessica Halifax
Sophomore / Tyler
“Elmwood”

Jessica E. Hall
Freshman / Tyler
“Happiness is a Leprechaun”

Stephanie Homann
Sophomore / Bullard
“Summer Rain”

Christina Ivey
Sophomore / Lindale
“Behold”

Christina Ivey
Sophomore / Lindale
“One Size Fits All”

Christina Ivey
Sophomore / Lindale
“Just a Game”

Zachary McClune
Freshman / Tyler
“Solitude”

Jonathan De La Piedra
Sophomore / Lindale
“The Final Letter”

Don Stryker
Freshman / Yantis
“Father So Far From Home”

The Bell Tower Arts Journal

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Art and Photography Selections

Emily Michelle Cotton
Freshman / Chandler
Window Clones / B&W Digital Photograph

Danielle Delgado
Sophomore / Tyler
Alone / B&W Digital Photograph

Danielle Delgado
Sophomore / Tyler
Defiance / B&W Digital Photograph

Sarah Elizabeth Dupree
Sophomore / Bullard
Bryson / 18x24 Prismacolor

Maeghan Ghormley
Freshman / Van
Abandoned / Gelatin Silver Image

Shenna Hampton
Sophomore / Tyler
Just Don't Know! / B&W Digital

Morgan Hare
Sophomore / Lubbock
Old Brick Chimney / 35mm Color

Carole Kiphen
Freshman / Waco
How Great / B & W Photograph

Cierra McGuckie
Sophomore / Celeste
Strings / 41"x30" Watercolor, Acrylic, and
Charcoal

Jessica Niebel
Freshman / Van
Looking Down From Above / Digimax Master

Joyle Rosenberg
Sophomore / Tyler
Teachings of Honor / B&W Digital Photograph

Joyle Rosenberg
Sophomore / Tyler
Riding the Rails / B&W Digital Photograph

Rachel Salcido
Tyler
Snidal/Calla / 3'x3' Oil on Canvas

Sarah Dean Stallings
Sophomore / Tyler
Baby Face / B&W Digital Photograph

Sarah Dean Stallings
Sophomore / Tyler
Las Vegas / B&W Digital Photograph

Sarah Dean Stallings
Sophomore / Tyler
Sweet Anticipation / B&W Photograph

Sarah Dean Stallings
Sophomore / Tyler
Zebra Stripes / B&W Digital Photograph

Mary Tarbutton
Freshman / Whitehouse
Napping / Digital SLR

Hayley Young
Sophomore / Liberty City
Disconnected / B&W Photograph

Hayley Young
Sophomore / Liberty City
Hiding Under My Hat / B&W Photograph

Hayley Young
Sophomore / Liberty City
Your Empty Words and My Red Shoes / B&W
Photograph

TF